

## **AESTHETIC THEORY-EPIPHENY**



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A Portrait of an Artist is the Bildungsroman-the novel of formation, describing a character's struggle from childhood towards maturity, this journey depicted through various techniques like **AESTHETIC THEORY**, with addition of **EPIPHENY**, existentialism, sense and sensuousness, escapism, and negative capability. Joyce mixes facts and fiction and a lot of myth and symbolism for expressing his ideas. Here Joyce depicts some stages of Stephen's life as Shakespeare defines in his **ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE**. Stephen rebels against his parents, siblings, country, and religion and so on for asserting his existence.

Stephen is the first **CHRISTIAN MARTYR**. In what sense will this Stephen be a martyr? The first Stephen didn't serve the Jewish religious authorities but Christian. Whom will this Stephen not serve? Like Daedalus, the fabulous artificer, who built himself wings, Stephen will also **ESCAPE** from the prison which Ireland has become to him. And he will do this not only literally by going abroad but also spiritually by soaring on the wings of art into the air – which is the medium of intellect and inspiration.

There're certain actions and choices which Stephen does, as he progresses in life, that reflects a certain direction; and that is of course to be an artist, defines his own existence and what he wants to be in life. The novel has some **autobiographical** touch, the protagonist Stephen goes through similar stages in life to Joyce, and he even attends the same school.

Joyce and Stephen's aesthetic theory based on the biblical references in the strange woman's episode in Davin's story, art, modernism, the city and consumer culture, the gender, and the post-colonial approach. The

need for Stephen to distance himself from the religion and political forces in Dublin pave his way to become an artist. Stephen is alienating himself, acting differently from his peers, not doing what his society expects him to do.

There's a short section about a child's view of the world. He hears a story of a '**moocow**' told by his father through '**a glass**' with a '**hairy face**'. His mother has a **nicer smell** than his father. She cleans his bed, which he wets as it goes from '**warm**' to '**cold**'. The horizon expands to relatives, one of whom, Dante, mentions a political figure, Parnell, and so we now have a glimpse of the world beyond the house. The novel is about the protagonist's perspective, and less about the outside world, whether persons, or places, or politics. All '**extrinsic factors**' are indeed important but only insofar as they are related to him. We soon find him grows older and older during the narrative. There will be some development of his consciousness and of him.

Symbolically, Joyce weighs the choices that are available to Stephen in terms of the colors of '**white**' and '**red**' roses, those are beautiful colors to think of. Stephen can choose one of two things **NATIONALISM** or **RELIGION**, these're what the two colors symbolize; the two ways by which his countrymen live. But he thinks of a third choice symbolized by the '**green rose**'. He doesn't want to choose either this or that. He wants to look for other choices in life because he wants to be an individual person. Even though the '**green rose**' doesn't exist in Ireland, he is determined to find it somewhere else in the world.

The matter of which of the available choices is puzzling again when his friends ask him whether he kisses his mother or not before going to bed, Stephen wonders what choice he should make. It seems both of the available choices are not satisfactory neither to him nor to his society. That's why he decides to practice his **FREEDOM** and will stand for himself. When he goes to the rector's room to correct the injustice, he suffered by his teacher, he finds his friends waiting for him and they

gathered around him to cheer him for standing up for himself. Then he begins to assert himself in his school and society as a unique character.

Stephen also feels free because by practicing his will, he no longer feels involved in his society or its customs. '**Existence comes before essence**' which means 'man first of all exists, encounters himself, surge up in the world, and defines himself afterwards'. It's not the physical existence, nor it's person's gender, color, society, class, and race but it's how a person '**DEFINES**' himself to assert his individuality.

The order of the life repelled him, by choosing his own path, he gains knowledge of the world through his own experiences. He's not afraid of **SINNING** or making mistakes because that is the way he wants to experience the world. He made up his mind to choose the secular artistic life over religion. At this moment he decided his own destiny.

He violates the path which is guided by others – **imposed human nature** - and prefers his own '**wayward instinct**' because he realizes that there's no other guidance the he can follow except his own, to experience life he must go through defeats as well as victories – 'to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild Angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty'.

A girl makes him realize that there's nothing wrong in admiring mortal beauty, as opposed to divine inhuman beauty of ivory and gold of the church. Now Stephen is ready to celebrate mortal beauty and living and accepting life with all its uncertainties, is the only way to satisfy him, as humans can't achieve any glory in life without tasting defeat. He gets away from others who have no will to follow their inner feelings. He now can't stand the city of Dublin, he feels that its weight is pulling him downwards and preventing him from flying, the **city's ignorance** like a great **dull stone pulled his mind downward**.

He appreciates the great writers since ancient times, because they all contributed to humanity and he aspires to make his own share of

contribution towards heritage of humanity. He confidently says that he is right and others are wrong. Just as he has experienced both sin and religion before he found his own way, the artist must experience different aspects of life before his personality is fully developed and detached himself from others.

For Stephen '**FREEDOM**' means responsibility also. His last sentence is addressed to his symbolic father whom he chose for guidance, the mythical Daedalus, to stand by his side. He violates from religious dogmas because religion always makes bound to its adherences, Stephen's fix is his uncontrolled sexual instinct which is quite natural in human beings and he fulfills it by a prostitute. After hearing the touchy sermons, he condemns himself and apologises his previous sins but later on he realizes that **religion provides grave, ordered, and passionless life**; so he leaves religion because for him religion can't fulfil his needs and guide him rightly.

In short, Stephen epiphany supports his aesthetic theory because he observes the world with a different angle. The language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home. His reaction to the battle of dogmas is that of a '**terror stricken face**'. For him, there's frequency and violence of temptation, and a person can conquer this universe only when he has freedom of choice because he begins to feel **sensation of spiritual dryness** in himself by accepting his corrupt spirit. He wants a life of grace, virtue and happiness as an artist. He contacts to the world of broken images artistically. This is the psycho-narration of our hero.